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# Curios and Relics

## Toys & Games

### Funeral Train Replica

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

# Spark of history ignites CH Bicentennial project

## Lincoln's private rail car burned here

By SUSAN AMOS

The year was 1911. It was March 18 or thereabouts, probably a cool, dry spring day. A young boy went out to burn some papers or grass in the 35th and Architect Avenues NE vicinity.

MAYBE IT was a windy day, maybe the lad was thanking about other chores he had left to do or maybe he was simply daydreaming, but whatever the reason his small fire got out of control. The fire spread across 10 city blocks and has become the most historic fire of early Columbia Heights — the burning of Abraham Lincoln's private railroad coach.

John W. Hemak, 4401 Quincy St. NE, is reviving the community's interest in the coach. He has made railroads his hobby and he belongs to several related historical groups including the Minnesota Transportation Museum, the Northern Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, Chicago's Central Electric Railfans Association and Boston's Railway and Locomotive Historical Society.

The possibility of reconstructing Lincoln's coach interested Hemak, who is also a member of Columbia Heights Bicentennial Commission. Others heard about it from him and grouped the coach reconstruction as a Bicentennial project. The commission later included \$500 in their budget for the project.

ACCORDING TO Hemak the coach was unique in itself. It was built in 1863 at the government's military car shops in Alexandria, Va. for the special use of President Abraham Lincoln and his cabinet.

It was a putnam rail coach with four trucks, which Hemak explained are sets of wheels with four wheels in each set. They are used on cars designed to carry heavy loads. Every available facility was built into the coach, including sleeping quarters, office, parlor and sitting room. It was armored for the president's protection.

AFTER PRESIDENT Lincoln's assassination April 14, 1865 the coach was used as his funeral car. It carried the president's body and that of his son Willie, who died in February 1862 to their final resting places in Spring

field, Ill.

The government sold the car in 1868 to T.C. Durant, who was then building the Union Pacific railway. It was used as the official car of the Union Pacific Railroad Company when they were building the Transcontinental railroad in and around Colorado.

IN 1903 Franklin B. Snow purchased it from the railroad company. It was later exhibited at the St. Louis World's Fair in the Lincoln Museum.

Thomas Lowry, president of the Twin City Rapid Transit Company, purchased the coach in 1905 and brought it to Minneapolis, parking it in Columbia Heights. According to Hemak, Lowry realized the historic importance of the car and thought it should be preserved. Lowry was also involved with real estate and the Arcade Investment Company. He used the car as a sales office for land promotion.

Lowry died in 1909 and his heirs donated the coach to the Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs. They planned to move it from 37th Avenue and Quincy Street to Mendota, where it could be preserved with the old Sibley house as part of the State Historical Museum.

DURING THE historic Columbia Heights fire the coach was destroyed. All that remained was a coupling link, which is displayed at the Hennepin County Historical Society, and charred fragments of wood. Hemak said some of the wood may still be around, but the commission has been unable to locate anyone who has any of it.

Hemak and his son John M. Hemak have built a small scale prototype of the car for the Bicentennial Commission. Hemak said this was the first step in preparation for the city's model, which will be built if there is still interest in the project.

HE SAID the state may provide a grant for the creation of a full scale model. Interest in that type of project has also been shown by the National Park Service and the Minnesota Transportation Museum.

Hemak is enthused about the coach reconstruction project. He is still searching for builder's plans of the coach and hopes the commission will continue to support the project.



POINTING OUT features on his prototype model of Lincoln's coach is John W. Hemak, 4401 Quincy St. NE, Columbia Heights. Hemak with the help of his son, John M. Hemak, created the model from a

copied picture of the coach. They are still searching for builder's plans for the interior design of the coach, which burned in Columbia Heights on March 18, 1911.

# Vandals

# Warther's

of Dover, Ohio



"*W*orld's Master Carver", ERNEST WARTHER, presents an amazing display of hand-carved wonders. Using only a knife, files and native ingenuity, he carved the history of steam locomotives and trains from 250 B.C. to the present day.

He also carved a model of an 18th century steel mill, with irate foreman and sleeping worker, as well as many other intricate carvings.

Smithsonian Institute appraised it as a "Priceless Work of Art". Ernest was never interested in the fortunes he was offered because in his words "our roof don't leak, we ain't hungry and we don't owe anybody."

To quote Henry Morgan, "He is truly an American genius. Mr. Warther's accomplishments are gratifying examples of what Americans can do."

*Carvings of American Railroad Heritage.*





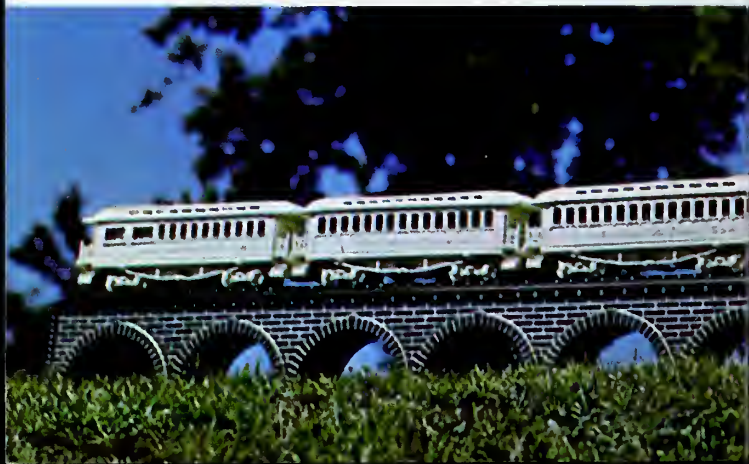
### *The Lincoln Funeral Train*

Mr. Warther was a great admirer of Abraham Lincoln. He made many carvings concerning Lincoln's life and at the age of 80 spent one year carving an 8 foot ebony and ivory replica of the Lincoln Funeral train. Looking through the lighted window of the funeral coach one can see Lincoln lying in his coffin. The eagle insignia and gentle folds of carved ebony draperies are part of the fine detail.

This train was completed on the 100th Anniversary of Lincoln's death.

The ivory carvings are the favorite of many visitors. These portray Great Events in American History:

- The Driving of the Golden Spike, where the engines from the East and West met with Stanford driving the golden spike.
- Casey Jones Engine of Ballad fame.
- The General and Texas engines portrayed in The Great Locomotive Chase of the Civil War.
- The John Bull, first passenger train, actually travels in a 16 foot case.
- The Empire State Express is 8 feet long and took 12 months to carve. The engine and coaches were made from an 81 lb. elephant tusk. It is on a simulated stone arch bridge carved of ebony.



Ernest Warther, the son of Swiss immigrants, was born near Dover, Ohio on Oct. 30, 1885. His formal education ended with the second grade. At the age of five, while tending the family cow, he found a weather-beaten pocket knife and started whittling. He enjoyed creating things from wood and his whittling career was started.

Young Warther, at the age of 14 began 21 years of working in a local steel mill. He married and raised a family of three girls and two boys.

Ernest was 27 when he began carving the



### *The "Big Boy" of the Union Pacific*

evolution of the steam engine. This is depicted through a series of 64 working models carved to scale, 1/2" to the foot. One of these has over 10,000 parts and took more than 2,000 hours to carve.

Early in his carving career Ernest discovered the importance of knives that will hold their edge carving ebony and ivory. Unable to find any of such quality, he decided to make his own. Thus, out of necessity was born another hobby—making knives. Experts say they are the world's finest. This led to the making of kitchen cutlery which was sold to supplement his income.

All moving parts and bearings of the carved locomotives are made from Arguto, an oil-bearing wood. Some of these models have run over 60 years without repair.

Ernest died at the age of 87 leaving his 64th carving unfinished.



# Warther's

of Dover, Ohio



The original work shop built in 1912 (left above) adjoins the main exhibit building. It also features Mrs. Warther's flower garden. Her collection of 50,000 buttons, no two alike, are arranged in beautiful designs on the walls and ceiling of the original museum (not shown) built in 1936. Warther's also exhibits one of the finest collection of Indian arrow points in the United States.

From the new two acre parking area you approach the main building across an authentic reproduction of a railroad trestle. This spans an old mill race.

In the parking area is an antique steam engine, a railroad caboose and an operating hand car. Picnic facilities are available.

Warther's is a pleasant place to visit for every member of the family any season of the year. Tour reservation for large groups can be made in advance by calling (216) 343-7513 or writing Warther's, 331 Karl Ave., Dover, Ohio 44622.

OPEN DAILY 9 A.M. to 5 P.M.  
July and August 8 A.M. to 7 P.M.

Closed Christmas,  
New Years, Easter,  
and Thanksgiving.







THE FUNERAL TRAIN OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN 1865

